Caricatures and Characters: James Gillray and Jane Austen

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Abstract
This paper argues that Jane Austen is a satirist by likening her to James Gillray. Gillray, like Austen, is and was both a popular, pleasing artist and an ambiguous one, hard to read politically: Was he harder on Fox or Pitt? Here I compare a couple of characteristic Gillray images with Austen's works, showing they have stylistic affinities to Austen's style. Through an analysis of *Sense and Sensibility*, this paper argues that by satirising the ruling class in her society, Jane Austen – like Gillray – portrayed some human creatures as monsters.

Keywords: caricature, character, Austen, Gillray.

1. Regulated Hatred

Although it was admired by some powerful literary critics when it was published in 1940, D.W. Harding's essay, "Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen" did not alter received ideas about "dear Jane." After all, 1940 was the year her devotees founded the Jane Austen Society, with the object of converting the Austen cottage in Chawton – still a popular tourist destination – into a shrine. Harding's shocking ascription of hatred to Jane Austen is hard to square with gendered visions of the novelist as a paragon of feminine feeling and decorum – and is sometimes misread as a diagnosis of a sexually frustrated old maid. His very different point is that Austen's management of feelings of hatred for her neighbours – not dislike, but hatred – was the source of her art, and a model for transforming hostile feelings that lead to wars into elements of civilisation. In the current climate of hatred and moral confusion, it might be useful to recall Harding's essay, and his later essay on Austen, "Character and Caricature in Jane Austen" ([1968] 1998), as an antidote to the fashion for empathy among readers today – feeling for characters and novelists, feeling they are or might have been your

friends, and feeling good, generally, about yourself. The alternative to empathy, as I see it following Austen and Harding, is not coldness of heart but discrimination, awareness of the differences in intellect and perception, feeling and behaviour and style, that make people interesting – and amusing. In an effort to recuperate Harding's take on Austen, I consider her style of satire here in relation to another artist of her time, the caricaturist James Gillray[1].

Gillray (1756 or 1757-1815), a male visual artist a generation older, prodigiously productive over a longer period, was dramatically different from Austen (1775-1817). His subjects range from apocalyptic visions to the pain of a swollen toe, but he is best known for political satires. Indeed, a detail from one of his caricatures – "New Morality", published in *The Anti-Jacobin Review* (1798) – illustrates the paperback cover of Claudia L. Johnson's ground-breaking study, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: 1988). Crammed with monsters and words and over-enlarged, the image is hard to decipher; Johnson barely comments on it; but certainly it identifies Gillray's work with the turbulent politics of the time. In contrast, in spite of the work of scholars like Johnson and Marilyn Butler, Austen continues to be associated with domestic and private life and social satire – subjects that were in Gillray's line of sight as well. A discussion of Austen and Gillray might fruitfully compare his commentaries on drawing rooms, family life, and even gothic novels with hers; in an earlier essay, I somewhat fancifully read his *High-Change on Bond Street* (1792) as an illustration of *Sense and Sensibility* (Brownstein 2015). Here, in an effort to pin down Austen's and Gillray's aesthetic affinities – their ways of seeing individuals and their views of the aim of satire – I look at two familiar prints by Gillray, the first a politically charged portrait caricature and the other in a genre isolated by recent print historians, notably Diana Donald (1996) and Brian Maidment (1996) – the print-shop window picture. Again I focus most on the first novel Austen published.

2. Reading Austen and Gillray

"Other pictures we look at, – his prints we read." Charles Lamb on Hogarth ([1811] 1935: 309)

[1] See Lee 2010.

"…because they were fond of reading, she fancied them satirical; perhaps without exactly knowing what it was to be satirical; but *that* did not signify. It was censure in common use, and easily given." On Lady Middleton, in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* ([1811] 1933: 246)

At first glance the differences between Gillray and Austen are so overwhelming as to foreclose any possibility of kinship: engraver and novelist, male and female, urban and rural, one famously produced scandalous and even scatological works while the other's are notoriously pure. His two-dimensional people are aggressively flat, while the characters in Austen's novels are praised as "round," in E.M. Forster's term, which is to say psychologically complex ([1927] 1958: 65). Their status as artists is also different. Partly because of Austen's enormous influence and prestige, a "literary" novel is seldom dismissed today as "only a novel," as it was in her time, while assumptions about "mere caricature" – ephemeral, easy, and trivial, dependent on time and history instead of rising to universal truths – still obtain (although recent students of the art form in general, and Gillray's work in particular, have begun to correct that).

Austen and Gillray have in common a time and place and cultural legacy, a keen eye and ear for affectations, moral and aesthetic self-confidence, and elegant authoritative lines. Demonstrating that the so-called polite classes are, precisely, not, both of them claimed the authority of the Tory satirists Pope and Swift (see, for example, Swift's "Polite Conversation" (1738), in which a party of gentry, at table, solemnly exchange banalities). Their own politics are in different ways ambiguous. Attacking the vanity, hypocrisy, stupidity, and selfishness of the ruling genteel class that presumed to set the high moral tone as well as the style of England and civilisation, Austen and Gillray set up as moral scourges and authorities on true wit and real elegance. Deploring the ethics of the ruling class, both of them aped and improved on its aesthetics. Both brilliantly seized on the telling, pointed detail (visual, linguistic) on which to rest a claim to truth. At his rudest Gillray could combine the impolitic with the exquisite (see, for example, his savage but demure *Fashionable Contrasts*, which comments on a marriage in the royal family by portraying two pairs of well-shod feet)[2]. Both Austen and Gillray channelled their

[2] "Fashionable Contrasts; – or – The Duchess's little Shoe yielding to the Magnitude

ambivalences into art, popular and complex and therefore potentially "high." Their best work is suffused by a consciousness of looking and seeing, reading and understanding, that invites us to enjoy the illusion of intimacy, even complicity, with them. Reading Austen reading people who read one another, looking from Gillray's viewpoint at spectators watching spectacles on London streets, we mimic the figures in the picture while pondering the stakes of doing so.

From the 1790s through the 1810s, England and the world were going through dramatic social, political, and economic changes. France, the national enemy, continued to signify glamour and high fashion, but it was also a threat; people feared invasion by the French, and another revolution like the French one. In *Northanger Abbey,* Austen joked about neighbourhood networks of "voluntary spies" ([1818] 1933: 198). James Gillray, a Londoner, was brought up in the peculiarly stern Moravian church, and later educated at the Royal Academy; Jane Austen was a genteel country parson's dowerless daughter. Both shared Burke's fear of losing the cultural heritage and their country's distinctiveness and distinction. They shared some views of the Opposition, as well.

While the artists of the Golden Age of Caricature addressed, primarily, a male reading public, graphic satire would not have been unknown to the Austen sisters. The print culture burgeoning in London permeated the countryside: Edward Ferrars, in *Sense and Sensibility,* marvels at the sheet music and prints the cultivated Dashwood sisters would order from London to Devonshire. At home, Jane Austen played the piano and her sister Cassandra sketched – and tried her hand at caricaturing, as many lady amateurs did. Cassandra's peculiar, often reprinted sketch of Jane – which is almost as often "improved" and sweetened – is arguably a caricature of the younger sister's baleful stare. A recent scholar has made the case that her illustrations of the manuscript of Jane's satirical juvenile "History of England" were caricatures of members of the Austen family[3]. No question, the Austens were familiar with Hogarth, whose works were crucial to the development of caricature's Golden Age. A letter Jane

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of the Duke's Foot", published January 24, 1792 by H. Humphrey, has been recently reprised by the British political cartoonist Steve Bell as a comment on Anglo-American relations in the era of Theresa May and Donald Trump.

[3] See Alexander and McMaster 2015; and Upfal and Alexander 2009.

wrote to Cassandra in September 1796 suggests that chez Austen *The Harlot's Progress* was considered to be as respectable and quotable as Shakespeare. Planning a visit to London, the nearly twenty-one-year-old Jane chafed at the requirement that a chaperone accompany her: trying to suit the schedules of available protectors, caustic about her own dependency, she alludes to the first plate in Hogarth's graphic narrative with easy familiarity: "I had once determined to go with [her brother] Frank to-morrow and take my chance &c.; but they dissuaded me from so rash a step – as I really think on consideration it would have been; for if the Pearsons were not at home, I should inevitably fall a Sacrifice to the arts of some fat Woman who would make me drunk with Small Beer" (Austen 1995: 12)[4].

That the goofy notion of seduction by beer appealed to young Jane Austen as Hogarth's fat woman's leer and moles did not, especially, suggests her not-so-visual bent. (Gillray, in contrast, was obsessed with language.) Her novels do not have much to say about what people look like. Most of the heroines are at or above "the medium height," Emma has "the true hazle eye" ([1815] 1933: 39) and Elizabeth has a pair of bright eyes, but choosing the hair colour of the leading ladies has proved a challenge and an opportunity to filmmakers. There are of course some visual details in the novels that tell. If Mr. Collins is a "heavy looking" ([1813] 1933: 64) young man only metaphorically, it signifies that comfortable Mrs. Jennings (like Hogarth's comfortable bawd) is fat; and mean Mrs. Ferrars has "a lucky contraction of the brow" that saves "her countenance from perfect insipidity." ([1811] 1933: 232). In a famously disturbing passage in *Persuasion* (1818), Anne Elliott and Wentworth, long-separated true lovers, bond again in silence, brimming with emotion, over the comedy, as they see it, of "the large fat sighings" of bulky Mrs. Musgrove, who (reminded of him by Wentworth) weeps for her dead sailor son Dick, "whom alive no one had cared for." The narrator's shocking intrusion into the narrative to comment on the unavoidable need to notice discrepancies between "personal size

[4] See Brewer's (2000) epigraph from a letter from James Townley to Hogarth, 28 February 1750: "Your works I shall treasure up as a family book, or rather one of the classics… You will be read in your course, – and it will be no unusual thing to find me in a morning in my great chair with my three bigger boys around me, construing the sixth chapter of the Harlot's Progress…".

and mental sorrow," and her high-handed, cold-hearted dismissal of poor dead Dick Musgrove *and* his mother's sorrow are witty and authoritative ([1818] 1933: 68).

Pitilessly observant of differences among people, Austen (like Gillray) was interested in personal distinctiveness and distinction, and in the pursuit of social distinction. Her complicated subject is the hierarchical social matrix that encourages the assuming (and conferring) of distinctions, the fabrication of false distinctions, good and bad ways of discriminating among distinctions, and in general the study of (as Elizabeth Bennet puts it) character. Mockery is almost as basic as money and class, in such a society. "For what do we live, but to make sport for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn," Mr. Bennet memorably philosophises, in *Pride and Prejudice* ([1813] 1933: 364). That this aspect of social life still survives after many revolutions is perhaps one good reason for the enduring popularity of Austen's novels. Satire is an element of sociability. That some people don't get the jokes helps others to form exclusive coteries. Since Pope and Swift, at least, satirists have protested that they don't laugh invidiously at what people can't help being – a hunchback, for instance, or a Jew. And they have insisted on the civilising work done by laughter.

So genteel is Austen's tone that she convinces her readers laughing at the neighbours has a moral and civilising function; in his different way, so does Gillray. (To credit Gillray's work with benign properties is as shocking in some circles as ascribing hatred to Austen is in others.) Working towards the end of the eighteenth century, both artists were engaged in constructing civilisation, in the form of a broader reading public than the coterie addressed by Pope and Swift – people who could read, but were not classically educated, a virtual in-group or modern public aspiring to share but also to redefine and purify the ideals of the elite. Followers and students of fashion – or what is going on – these people, as they themselves see it, constitute (with the help of the satirists) a meritocracy for which ridicule seems necessary and civil, social and moral. What is perhaps most interesting about this, and surely most accessible now, is the question of how – in spite of how much has changed – the voice of the modern satirist, novelist or caricaturist, continues to invite complicity – or ganging up.

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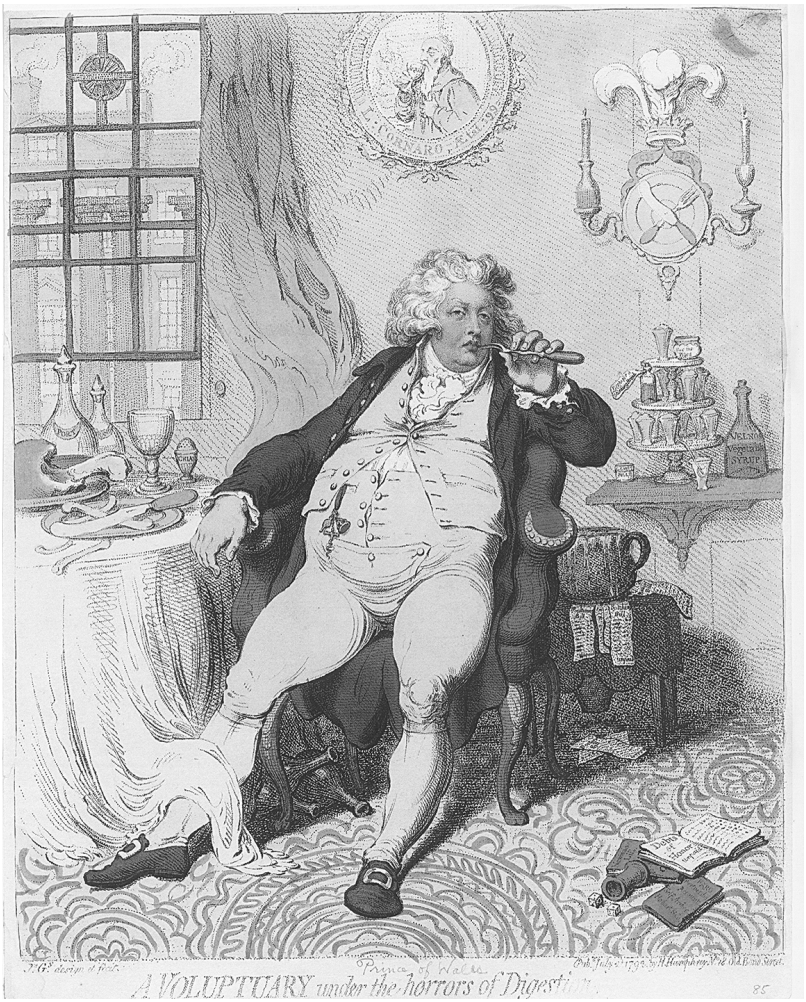
FIGURE 1
A Voluptuary under the Horrors of Digestion. Illustration by James Gillray. Published by H. Humphrey (July 2, 1792). Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University



Anyone who saw it in Hannah Humphrey's print shop would have recognised the man in this picture as the Prince of Wales. But Gillray identifies him as a type – not George Augustus Frederick, which he was, but "A Voluptuary under the influence of Digestion". To describe him generically thus is a little joke about his importance and

his celebrity – an evasion, an understatement, a euphemism. "Under the Horrors of Digestion" is similarly arch and playful, hyperbolic. In 1792, years before she was persuaded to dedicate *Emma* to the Prince Regent, as he became, Jane Austen would have identified this "voluptuary" as a particular well-known vain and louche young man about town, a type that turned up frequently in her youthful satires on fiction. Unlike the people she wrote stories about, he was not a character in a fiction but actual, alive. The differences between a person, a type, and a character fascinated both Austen and Gillray, partly because they overlapped with questions about moral character.

Henry T. Austen would insist on the matter of reference (with suspicious defensiveness) in the encomium he wrote after his sister's death: "She drew from nature; but, whatever might have been surmised to the contrary, never from individuals." ([1818] 1933). But of course her ideas of human nature were drawn from the people she knew and had heard gossip about. And of course Henry was writing long before the publication of passages like these in Austen's private letters:

> Charles Powlett gave a dance on Thursday, to the great disturbance of all his neighbours, of course, who, you know, take a most lively interest in the state of his finances, and live in hopes of his being soon ruined. (Austen 1995: 25)

> The Wylmots being robbed must be an amusing thing to their acquaintance, & I hope it is as much their pleasure as it seems their avocation to be subjects of general Entertainment. (Austen 1995: 76)

D.W. Harding was to argue, in 1940, that Austen was moved to write by her psychological need to manage – to control and regulate – her hatred of the people she was obliged to live with and indeed to depend on: people like Charles Powlett and her other neighbours, people like the more distant Prince of Wales. The more we learn about her life, the easier it is to find, in the novels, traces of people she knew. She never portrayed the likes of the Prince in a novel – although she does confess to startlingly strong feelings about him in a letter*:* "I suppose all the World is sitting in Judgement upon the Princess of Wales's Letter. Poor Woman, I shall support her as long as I can, because she *is* a Woman, & because I hate her Husband" (Austen 1995: 208). Had she seen this satirical portrait caricature, made long before his marital troubles, she might not have had quite

such strong feelings, but surely she would have been repelled by what she saw[5].

Elegantly dressed and curled, the young man sits on an upholstered armchair with beautifully curved long legs. His own plump legs are complacently spread before him. At the time the pose – seated – would have recalled idealised portraits of important men – history paintings – as well as fashion plates, another genre of prints popular at the time. But the fat Prince seems to sprawl, belly up and distended, stuffed. Only one of the buttons on his waistcoat can hook up with its buttonhole: the fabric strains. The three-quarter view is a tad too revealing; the blue coat framing his linen outlines a grotesque shape like a frog's. A specimen, indeed: this voluptuary is in no shape for amorous coupling. Clues to the invisible turmoil within – the "horrors of digestion" – are abundant in the carefully catalogued litter around him: the gnawed bones and dirty dishes on the table and, partly concealed by a tablecloth drawn aside like a theatre curtain, more empty wine bottles under it. On shelves behind him are smaller bottles for medicines, all legibly labelled, like the wines: nostrums for piles, bad breath, and venereal disease. Also here to be deciphered are long unpaid bills from doctors, butchers, and bakers, and for gambling debts incurred at the racing track and the card table. A brimming chamber pot stands on a table. It is all of it over the top.

Portrait caricatures like this one, sold at print shops like broadsides, in effect presented news – a critical view of persons in power, meant to mock but also to please. There is grace in the arm the Prince lazily raises, perhaps to pick his teeth with his fork. The swag of curtains and cloth are also graceful; the burlesque coat of arms on the wall (and on the cleaned plate before him), and the engraving of a portrait – of a famous long-lived water-drinker – from the Pitti Palace in Rome are signs of his status[6]. The discrepancy between the frog-Prince's high style and his animal reality – also between the artist's elegant line and what it shows – is comical. A stage, perhaps, in the Hogarthian "progress" of a royal rake, Gillray's portrait caricature is a witty summary judgment of the Prince's character. (When he was even fatter, years later, the caricaturist George Cruikshank portrayed the Prince Regent as "The Prince of Whales" (1812), frolicking in the water).

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[5] For Austen on the Prince Regent in *Emma,* see Sheehan 2006; and Harris 2017.

[6] For illuminating commentary on this and other graphic satires, see Stephens and George 1870-1954.

In Gillray's companion piece to *A Voluptuary*, *Temperance Enjoying a Frugal Meal* (1792), the gluttonous Prince's abstemious parents are at table, the King intently working the meat out of a soft-boiled egg while the Queen, beside him, dribbles vegetables down her chin. No bones, no bottles, and some kind of companionship – nevertheless disgusting. The point is obvious: the royals are eating animals like the rest of us. A spare, abstemious man himself, Gillray made a sub-specialty of spectacles of ugly eating: Germans eating sour-kraut; starved revolutionaries turned cannibal, roasting and eating people in Paris; John Bull eating French frigates; William Pitt and Napoleon slicing up the world, for all the world as if it were a rich plum pudding[7]. Eating is an easy metaphor for greed. At least since Swift in "A Modest Proposal" (1729) suggested with a straight face that the English could benefit from eating Irish babies, satirists have attacked the rich for literally feeding on the poor.

An earlier very different image by Gillray puts George III and his Queen together with their oldest son, at table. *Monstrous Craws at a New Coalition Feast* (1787) is very different from the comparatively charming domestic prints of 1792, more grotesque and disturbing. Inspired, in part, by a recent exhibition of exotic big birds, it portrays the King, Queen, and Prince as hideous monsters. Seated in front of a gated stone building, the "Treasury," they are stuffing themselves, using both hands and wielding outsize ladles to scoop up coins of the realm from a basin labelled "John Bull's Blood." (The first description of globules in blood was published in April 1674, in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society.) The grotesque little family's craws or gizzards – lumpy bags – are in front of each of them on the table, the son's an empty bladder, nearly as disturbing as what looks like the single breast of the Queen. All three are avid, and heavy-lidded as if drunk; weirdly, the King and Queen wear ruffled nightcaps, while the Prince is martially helmed, decorated with his emblem of three ostrich feathers. Metallic looking, set like statues on the street, they are the more grotesque for being a family, domestic as well as political

[7] See *Germans Eating Sour-Kraut*, May 7, 1803; *Petit souper a la Parisienne; – or – A Family of Sans-Culottes refreshing after the fatigues of the day,* Sept. 20 1792; *John Bull Taking a Luncheon: – or – British Cooks, cramming Old Grumble-Gizzard with Bonne-Chere*," October 24, 1798; *The Plumb-Pudding in Danger – or – State Epicures taking un Petit Souper*, February 26, 1805.

(their "coalition" glances at their differences, also at a new coalition of political parties in Parliament). Unlike the comic figures in the more subtly satirical caricatures of 1792, these are monsters.

Gillray relies on his public to recognise these people and to share his condemnation of their avarice and lack of taste. As print culture increased public access to private lives of actual people as well as characters in fiction, the lives of princes were increasingly exposed and known. And views of the family, sex, and marriage, as social historians have shown, changed radically in the course of the eighteenth century. To remind people in 1792 that princes of the blood had bodies and families, messy private lives and nasty personal habits, was a potentially incendiary act. The Campaign against Seditious Libel had culminated in Fox's Libel Act in 1792; in 1792-93, there were sedition trials[8]. In a sense the caricaturists flattered the subjects of their satire – royals, aristocrats, and politicians – by paying attention to them personally and making them celebrities. The story goes that George III sent Gillray's caricatures of him back to Hanover to show how important he was in England.

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Dr Johnson delighted the much younger Frances Burney, who wrote novels and plays and was also a gifted mimic, by calling her a "character-monger". I am charmed by his suggestion that artists who make and sell images of people, real and/or imaginary, are like iron-mongers, cheese-mongers and whoremongers, in the business of supplying the public with a desirable commodity. Eighteenth-century actors, visual artists, writers, and politicians catered to a growing desire to be entertained by the spectacle of people performing themselves. The newly-felt need for engaging, entertaining characters on the stage and the page contributed to the rise of the novel; interest in celebrities like the Prince of Wales fuelled the rise of caricature. By the time Gillray began to draw and engrave, and Austen to write novels, they could rely on a savvy reading public trained to look through a caricaturist's eyes, and a novelist's. Austen's readers could recall, for instance, the fops in Burney's *Evelina* (1778), who prepared the way for Mr. Rushworth's absurd delight in the pink satin coat he would wear

[8] See, for example, "A Bugaboo!", a 1792 caricature by Richard Newton.

for his role in the play, in *Mansfield Park* (1814). Gillray could rely on people to recognise Hogarth's Line of Beauty in his curvaceous Prince of Wales (and his curtains), and to savour the challenge of his own sharp angular style. The lines he drew, then etched on metal plates, were as distinctive as handwriting, and as boldly definitive of "real elegance," as she called it, as Austen's witty and graceful lines of text. And like her he lavished attention on the telling, pointed details that make her narratives and his pictures lively and long-lived. Polite society, in late eighteenth-century England, valued precision and grace. Its political and social leaders – respectable gentlemen and ladies of the ruling class – imagined themselves exemplars of those aesthetic and moral virtues. The satirists of the period point out, in lines inflected by their values, that frequently they are not – which both is and is not subversive.

3. *Sense and Sensibility* (Jane Austen, 1811)

"The sleep of reason produces monsters." Francisco Goya, "Caprichos" no. 43, 1796-97.

"Here comes Marianne," cried Sir John. "Now, Palmer, you shall see a monstrous pretty girl." (Austen [1811] 1933: 108)

Like Gillray's portrait caricature of the pretty Prince, the first novel Jane Austen published has an ambivalent relation to the genre it mimes and parodies – the high-minded, chaste love story written by and for ladies about quasi-allegorical heroines who represent ideals and marry into reality, in the happy end. These books often boasted abstractions as titles – *Secresy, Self-Controul, Discipline* – but a popular sub-genre featured sister heroines with contrasting characters (and kinds of beauty, like Snow White and Rose Red), whose paired names provided the titles. According to Cassandra Austen, when *Sense and Sensibility* was drafted, in the 1790s, its title was *Elinor and Marianne.* An early edition was advertised – perhaps accidentally – as "By Lady A." Both the anonymity of the author and the possibility that she had a title invited reading it as a roman à clef – and as a moral tale, descended from the conduct books and novels since Richardson's *Pamela*, which puzzled didactically over how a young woman should *be* in order that her virtue would be rewarded by marriage to a wealthy man. But Austen's first completed novel is hard to read that way: for

one thing, all three suitors of Elinor and Marianne Dashwood are dependent men and irresolute lovers, and for another the delicate distinctions between the sisters are overwhelmed by realistic threats to their survival, in the form of minor characters who lack the human qualities of sense and sensibility – moral monsters.

Austen's opening sentences promise a cosy story of comfortable life among the polite, or landed, classes: "The family of Dashwood had been long settled in Sussex. Their estate was large…" But it turns out that there is no comfort there, for the novel's sister heroines. The "respectable" family had for some years consisted only of a single elderly gentleman, the uncle of the heroines' father, who after the death of the sister who ran his household invited his nephew and heir to live with him, so he could enjoy the company and care of the nephew's wife and daughters, Elinor and Marianne. After their father's death, the large estate went to John, the son of his first marriage (and would go from there to *his* son). Patriarchy and primogeniture effectively defraud the Dashwood sisters, who are left a mere thousand pounds apiece – in addition to their father's recommendation that their half-brother be kind to them. As soon as they can, the heirs to the estate, Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood, plot to define kindness, in a dialogue in which – for the good of their little Harry, they tell themselves – they decide to limit their generosity to a few household furnishings and occasional gifts of game. The narrator accounts obliquely for this enormity, with an analysis of the John Dashwoods' characters and their marriage. Of John we are told,

> He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold-hearted, and rather selfish, is to be ill-disposed: but he was, in general, well respected; for he conducted himself with propriety in the discharge of his ordinary duties. Had he married a more amiable woman, he might have been made still more respectable than he was; – he might even have been made amiable himself; for he was very young when he married, and very fond of his wife. But Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself; – more narrow-minded and selfish. (Austen [1811] 1933: 5)

The repetitions of "respectable" and "respected" suggest Austen's mistrust of respectability: her respectable people are, in general, deficient in generosity and awareness. Marriage and family furthermore – like patriarchy and primogeniture – have anti-social effects. While Fanny and John are well matched, although he could

have been a better man with another wife, the other young couples in the story – the Middletons and the Palmers – have nothing in common. And those who marry in the course of it – the John Willoughbys and the Robert Ferrarses – are mismatched, as well. Although a double wedding is the promised end of the stories of Elinor and Marianne, the novel's view of matrimony is dim. Its final sentence focuses (oddly) on the happiness of the unromantically married Elinor and Marianne – "though sisters". Not just Fanny Dashwood but the social world that makes her respectable is criticised by *Sense and Sensibility*. You might even say, caricatured.

The word "caricature" occurs only twice in Austen's works, here and in the penultimate chapter of *Northanger Abbey*, when Catherine Morland, back home after General Tilney ejected her from his abbey, is considered, in a rare moment of free indirect discourse, from her mother's point of view. As she watches Catherine, harshly separated from her lover, miserably moping about, Mrs. Morland reflects on her "loss of spirits" ([1818] 1933: 240). It occurs to her that "In her rambling and her idleness she might only be a caricature of herself; but in her silence and sadness she was the very reverse of all that she had been before" (p. 240). The distinction, as usual in Austen, is nice: Catherine's negative qualities, intensified, make her an exaggerated sketch of herself (she had always been restless and idle), but her silence and sadness is not at all like her. A caricature simplifies and exaggerates: it also forces you to compare it with something else, propels you to do a double take. Her mother sees Catherine as a mere sketch or two-dimensional version of the hearty girl she once was; similarly, selfish Fanny is an exaggerated version of John Dashwood. To see a person as a caricature is to compare her to someone else, or to reflect that she might have been different in different circumstances – to take a distanced, cold-eyed view of her.

In his second, later essay on Jane Austen, D.W. Harding points out that caricatures figure alongside characters in the novels. His great example is Mr. Collins of *Pride and Prejudice* who, having erroneously supposed out loud that her daughters had helped in the kitchen, apologises to Mrs. Bennet for about a quarter of an hour. Not plausible, Harding writes; "two or three minutes, perhaps". He goes on to argue that if Mr. Collins's courtship actually posed a danger to Elizabeth Bennet we would fear and hate this monster, while as things are we laugh at him. Harding does not say so, but surely we are persuaded to

laugh instead of trembling because Elizabeth and her parents – and Jane Austen pulling their strings – prepare us to do so. When Mr. Bennet receives the pompous letter that announces the visit of Mr. Collins, he reads it aloud to his wife and daughters. Elizabeth asks, "Can he be a sensible man, sir?," and her father replies with hilarious sobriety, "No, my dear; I think not. I have great hopes of finding him quite the reverse. There is a mixture of servility and self-importance in his letter, which promises well. I am impatient to see him." ([1813] 1933: 64). A very few pages later, the narrator's voice begins a chapter by echoing Mr. Bennet's words, authoritatively confirming his "great hopes" as the simple truth: "Mr. Collins was not a sensible man" (p. 70). We are all in on the joke, together. The witty father and daughter, the witty text, all dispose us to see Mr. Collins as a figure of fun, an amusing specimen, less than a complete and sympathetic human being.

Characters and caricatures cohabit, in Austen's novels; characters sometimes see other people as caricatures. To some extent there is a continuum. But a caricature is by definition a satirical view or image or shot of a person, a portrayal of someone inflexible and limited. Elizabeth, at the novel's end, looks forward to teaching Darcy to learn to be laughed at. But Mr. Collins couldn't begin to learn, any more than Fanny Dashwood could.

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When it becomes impossible for widowed Mrs. Dashwood to continue living at Norland in Sussex, she and her daughters move out of the so-called home counties to a cottage on her cousin Sir John Middleton's estate in Devonshire, a county closer to the sea. Maybe that's why it seemed like a good idea, as the Austen vogue of the 1990s moved into the twenty-first century, to liven up the scene with the pop-culture mash-up, *Sense and Sensibility and Sea-Monsters* (2009). But Austen's text as well as her geography might have suggested the idea. The moral monsters in her satirical novels for the most part don't look like monsters; their identity is made clear by language, their own or other people's about them. Sometimes a monster is introduced with a snarky satirical show of sentences, to make a reader take notice; sometimes someone damns by characterising him or her, as Mr. Bennet does Mr. Collins. The stultifying marriages of the John Dashwoods and the John Middletons are wittily described before their own inadequate

language bespeaks their inadequate minds and hearts. What these different kinds of social monsters have in common is the inability to discriminate among people, who are, to them, unreadable and more or less interchangeable: seeing one young man as more or less the same as his brother, the monsters Mrs. Ferrars and Lucy Steele, for instance, arbitrarily decide to disinherit and to marry their sons and lovers, Edward and Robert Ferrars. (The plot repeats the motif of doubling in different keys, underscoring it: the discriminating Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, for different reasons, mistake one man for another – Marianne when a distant figure seems to be Willoughby but turns out to be Edward, and Elinor, later, when Willoughby turns up as she expects Colonel Brandon. And the two seduced, abandoned, and erased women in the background, mother and daughter, are both named Eliza. Sameness and difference are the warp and woof of art – and civilisation.)

Unmistakably, the insensitive and tactless monsters in *Sense and Sensibility* identify themselves (as Mr. Collins does) by using language that is not their own. Commonplace, cliché-ridden, sometimes ungrammatical, it gets in the way of discriminating among people, ideas, and things. Take, for example, the use of the word "monstrous," a fashionable slangy intensifier (like "very") in the period. That the usage is archaic draws attention to it now, but I suspect that even in 1811 it leaped out of Austen's hand-made lapidary prose. The repetitions of the word, and its over-use by comic minor characters in *Sense and Sensibility,* suggest her disdain for its indiscriminate use: Henry Tilney, in *Northanger Abbey,* is eloquent about the mindless misuse of "nice". The sloppy language of Sir John Middleton and his in-laws the Palmers, and of the Steele sisters and their cousin Mrs. Jennings, suggests that they are not sufficiently careful (or *nice*) in their language and thinking – in effect, in their social relations – and that (therefore) they are social and moral monsters. Soon after Sir John praises Marianne oxymoronically as "a monstrous pretty girl" ([1811] 1933: 108), his sister-in-law Mrs. Palmer, assuming that Marianne will marry Willoughby, calls her, as if correctively, "a monstrous lucky girl to get him" (p. 116); revealing her bad taste, she says, "Lucy is monstrous pretty," a few pages later (p. 119). Her mother, Mrs. Jennings, declares she will be "monstrous glad of Miss Marianne's company," in London (p. 154), assures Colonel Brandon she is "monstrous glad" to see him (p. 165), and professes to be "monstrous glad" that there never was anything

between Elinor and Edward Ferrars (p. 258) – who she supposes is "monstrous fond" of Lucy Steele (p. 259). She is also "monstrous glad" that Lady Middleton is not angry at Lucy, and says Edward is "monstrous happy" to marry her (p. 274). (Evidently all emotion is monstrous to chatty Mrs. Jennings.) And Lucy's even more vulgar older sister Anne confides to Elinor, when she meets her at Kensington Gardens, that the gentleman accompanying her "makes a monstrous deal of money" (p. 275). Like Mr. Collins apologising to Mrs. Bennet "for about a quarter of an hour" (Austen [1813] 1933: 65), the repetition of the same slang word by different people in different contexts is not realistic. Dialogue works here in the service of caricature. The point is that these prosaic people, so different from the novel's fastidious reading heroines, are moral monsters. Their favourite word suggests a key to their characters. An analogous contemporary usage, *fabulous* or *fantastic* to signify enthusiasm or approval, is similarly tendentious: by using these favourite enthusiastic adjectives, Donald Trump suggests the truth that he himself is a fabrication or fiction.

4. Very Slippy Conclusion

"What should I do with your strong, manly, spirited Sketches full of Variety & Glow? –How could I possibly join them on to the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour?" Jane Austen, letter to James Edward Austen, December 16, 1816. (Austen 1995: 323)

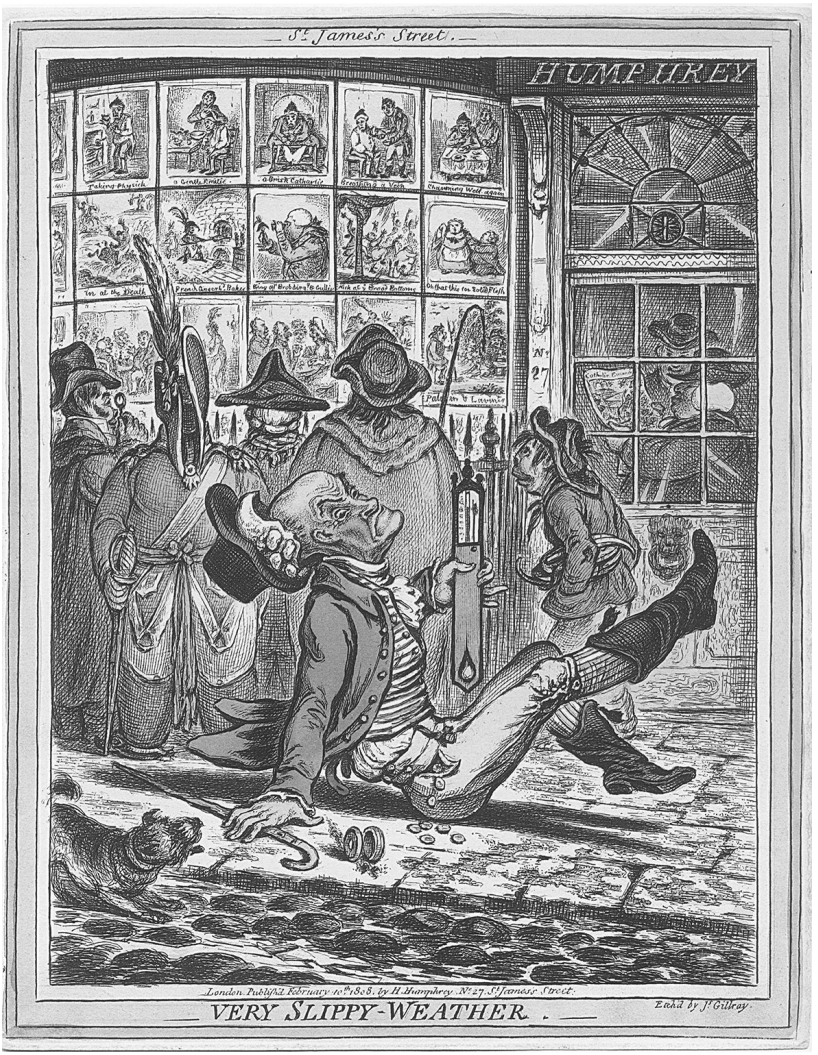
Trying to get a purchase on the slippery subject of satire, scholars have mapped the territory, arguing whether the word derives from the Latin *satura,* a mixed plate, or from the goatish grotesque called a *satyr,* and making distinctions between comedy and satire, farce, wit, irony, and burlesque. Theorists speculate about the more or less malign psychological sources of mockery (we laugh because a stumble and fall reduces a man to a thing, says Bergson; we laugh because *he* stumbles, while *I* remain erect and safe, says Freud). Distinctions are drawn between harsh Juvenalian and gentler Horatian satire; formal verse satire and satirical novels, plays, and verses; and of course between literary and graphic satire, which includes (but is not limited to) caricature. Practitioners of the satirical arts have made distinctions too, claiming to laugh at vice and folly but not at what could not be

helped, such as physical deformity or involuntary membership in an oppressed group (Pope was a Catholic with a deformed spine). Swift defended himself against the charge of misanthropy by writing, "I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth."[9] The mixture of love and hate, the difficulty of navigating between them, perhaps explains why satire in its many forms persists and raises dangerous questions: what makes you think you're entitled to laugh at me/him/her/them? Who do you think you are? To put Jane Austen and James Gillray cheek by jowl is to begin to argue that because it asks those questions satire should be taken seriously, and is not to be dismissed as only funny, or only a mad rant.

Ideas of what's natural and proper, like slang and rules of grammar, change over time and differ in different social groups. They are the stuff of cultural history and cultural critique. J.P. Malcolm's *Historical Sketch of the Art of Caricaturing* (1813) begins by describing and deploring monstrous children (babies born monstrous or turned monstrous because their mothers or nurses looked at monsters) and monstrous races (distant peoples whose facial features are unlike those of proper English ones). Malcolm goes on from aberrations and afflictions to discuss the art of making grotesques, beginning with caricatures of English politicians (people like Austen's anti-social Mr. Palmer). "Little more is occasioned than a laugh by, and at the expense of, the parties," he writes, deprecatingly; "yet it cannot be doubted it has its use, in checking many aberrations from propriety in such breasts as are not callous to the shame of seeing their persons exhibited in the shape of human monsters performing acts they could wish to be buried in eternal oblivion." (p. iv). His dismissal of "a laugh" and his certainty about propriety and callousness suggest the analyst's feeble grasp on his subject – caricature – and the limits of his sense of humour. ("Satyr is a sort of Glass," as Swift wrote, "wherein Beholders do generally discover every body's Face but their Own; which is the chief Reason for that kind Reception it meets in the World, and that so very few are offended with it" (Swift [1710] 1958: 215)). It is by no means a bad thing that ideas of the monstrous, the human, and the funny – related ideas – have changed over the last two hundred years.

[9] Jonathan Swift, Letter to Alexander Pope, September 29, 1725.

FIGURE 2
Very Slippy-Weather. Illustration by James Gillray. Published by H. Humphrey (February 10, 1808). Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University



Gillray's *Very Slippy-Weather* (1808) is susceptible of reading as a meditation on the sources of mockery and laughter – and/or on

caricature itself[10]. A street scene featuring multiple male figures, it is one of four prints on the subject of the seasons commissioned by a friend of the artist. It has been described by one commentator as "a view of the shop of Gillray's publisher, with the crowd usually assembled round the window" (Wright [1851] 2012: 478), and indeed the publisher's name is there in big letters, over the door. To me it seems that the artist's aim (in addition to advertising himself) was to catch the fleeting moment – long before photography – when the elderly man in the foreground slips on the ice and lets fly his hat and wig, the coins in his pocket, his booted feet, indeed everything but the outsized barometer gripped in his left hand. What the moment means is mysterious: it is not clear whether Londoners would have recognised the man as well as the shop, in 1808. Hitting the ground bottom first, the scientific geezer is a good deal larger than (reading from left to right) the four gentlemen in different elaborate big hats seen from behind who stand behind him, and the noseless but hatted boy carrying skates, at the gate, and the two men, also in hats, we can see through the glass of the shop door. The latter are reading the latest broadside, evidently a fresh caricature about Catholic emancipation; the others outside in the cold are absorbed in looking at the caricatures (by Gillray) displayed in the shop window. (Print shop windows were counted among the entertaining spectacles of London; scholars have commented on them as a species of street theatre that drew heterogeneous urban audiences.) The connoisseur at the extreme left holds a magnifying glass to help him read the pictures (and words) behind the window. Nobody (including the grotesque human face on the knocker attached to Hannah Humphrey's shop door) is helping or looking and laughing at the falling old man: should we be laughing, and if so at whom?

Seeing is surely an important subject here (the barometer; the magnifying glass). None of the many figures in this scene looks at any of the others: instead, they looks at the caricatures in the window. The central one, the most prominent and easiest to see, is Gillray's famous picture of Gulliver in the palm of the hand of the giant King of Brobdingnag, who looks down at him through a telescope. The

[10] See the cover of Donald 1996.

King strongly resembles George III, as portrayed by Gillray; and Gulliver, in his hat, looks a lot like England's enemy, who (largely because of Gillray) was derided as "Little Boney"[11]. (Mindful of the media like Donald Trump, later on, Napoleon went so far as to object that he was much taller than Gillray made him look.) In Swift's story, the benign King of Brobdingnag expostulates to Gulliver, who has just described the customs and politics of his country, and Gillray has engraved, in mirror-writing, his (Swift's) words in the picture: "I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth." The viewer of *Very-Slippy Weather* cannot quite read those words, as presumably the man with the magnifying glass can; but in 1808, Gillray's admirers would have had no trouble recalling their gist. The passage of time has complicated the ambiguities of this print. Is the King's diatribe directed against England or France, or more generally at humanity? Is the point that satire against their nation – or species – distracts men even from the events going on under their noses (if behind their backs)? Is it more narrowly that well-dressed respectable men lack sympathy for their elderly, angular neighbours? (Do syphilitic boys without noses lack human sympathy as well?) Or might the more modest point be that the artist, who frames what you look at and determines point of view and scale, has the power to shape your vision (unless, or even if, you are a grotesque door-knocker)? Or is it that while life is short, art is long – especially when it's framed and for sale?

Framing the world as they see it, showing it to you from their satirical point of view, persuading you to share their vision, artists like James Gillray and Jane Austen teach you to see things – and people – as you might not have seen them otherwise. We admire the skill that made their images effective and indelible, and, even more, their knack of converting ephemeral and negative personal emotions – hatred, anger – into something. ("To be mistress of Pemberley might be something!," (Austen [1813]: 245) Elizabeth Bennet thinks.) The world is the larger and richer, and we are, for what they made of their regulated hatred. Laughing at the neighbours cannot solve the problem of evil, or even nasty feelings. But it can help.

[11] See also, for example, Gillray's *The King of Brobdingnag and Gulliver* (1804).

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